

“If Jesus Was Crucified on Friday, How Was He Dead for Three Nights?”

I am looking for an answer to the “three days, three nights in the tomb” prophecy. Jesus was only in the tomb three days and TWO NIGHTS. I have seen the day portion of this prophecy explained. However, I have never heard a convincing explanation of how Friday and Saturday night can be three nights. Help!

There are several views that address this question. One view is that Jesus was crucified on Wednesday. 72 hours later later, Saturday evening, He rose and the empty tomb was discovered on Sunday.

Another view is that Jesus died on Thursday. I take the view Jesus was crucified on Friday and rose on Sunday. All prophecies state He will rise on the third day. (Matthew 16: 21, 17:23, 20:19, 27:64, Luke 9:22, 18:33, etc...) The events of the gospels seem to correlate best with a Friday crucifixion. Only one passage talks about him being in the grave three days and three nights, Matthew 12:40. If not for this one passage, all scholars would agree on a Friday crucifixion. So we are really dealing with the question of one passage and how is that related in light of all the other passages?

In Jewish thinking, a part of a day is equivalent to a whole day. Genesis 42:17 states that Joseph held his brothers in prison for three days and in verse 18 states he spoke to them on the third day and released them. 1 Kings 20:29 says Israel and Syria camped for 7 days and then on the seventh day the began battle. Other passages—Esther 5:1, 1 Samuel 30:12—show similar thought. So Old Testament language shows the expression “three days,” “third day,” and “three days and

three nights” are used to express the same period of time. Rabbinic literature shows the same thing. Rabbi Eleazr ben Azariah wrote in 100 A.D., “A day and night are an Onah (period of time) and the portion of an Onah is as the whole of it.”

So we conclude the expression “after three days,” “on the third day,” and the “three days and three nights” are all one and indicate the same time span.

Pat Zukeran

Probe Ministries